



# Technical Corrections

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The youth coach is the most important teacher of the game in our country. More important than the MLS coach, more important than National Team coaches, and more important than top-level college coaches. It is the youth coach who helps young players develop an appetite for the game and also develop the correct technical and tactical habits. Two of the most common technical flaws young players have is the inability to receive a ball and the inability to drive the ball forward with accuracy and velocity.

Receiving the ball with the inside of the foot is the most common way of controlling the ball but players must have their ankle locked as the ball makes contact and to do this, the player must have the toe slightly pointed up. Players who have a loose ankle and their toe is pointed down will find it impossible to receive the ball especially if it's arriving with pace. Additionally, many players do not "see" the ball onto the body part. Players taking their eye off the ball at the moment of contact whether receiving or passing is a common reason for poor execution. Their key teaching points in receiving the ball in soccer are:

1. Get in the line of flight of the ball.
2. Present the body part to the ball.
3. Eyes on the ball at the moment of contact.
4. Cushion the body part (as in catching an egg).

Furthermore, our players frequently have not been correctly taught how to strike a ball to make it go straight in the air with velocity. This technique must be taught correctly to players and one of the best methods is to show them NFL place kickers or MLS goalkeepers taking a goal kick. In both of these instances, the following techniques are demonstrated:

1. The ball must be "out of player's feet". Players cannot kick the ball over distance if it is underneath them.
2. Approach is slightly from the side.
3. The final step, which places the support foot alongside the ball, is a long hop or driving step. The support foot must be pointing toward the target.
4. Head must be steady, eyes on the ball.
5. Player drives through left of center (if using the right foot) to make the ball go straight, and right of center, if using the left foot.
6. Player's left hand points at the target (right foot).
7. Toe must be pointed down all the way through the kicking action.
8. Leg extends toward the target.

Rather than strike balls aimlessly into an empty net prior to practice, the coach should have players practice trying to hit the crossbar from the top of the penalty box.

The English Football Association's research indicated that it was almost impossible for players to cure technical flaws after the age of 14. This puts the burden of knowing how to teach the techniques of soccer on the youth coach, the most important coach in the country. This is why the NSCAA has such a heavy emphasis on technical training in the National Youth Diploma and the National Diploma.